

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended): A dehydrated shelf stable vegetable product which comprises a compressed vegetable piece having a moisture content of about 12% or less, and a substantially intact cellular structure, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes and wherein the vegetable is selected from a fleshy vegetable.
2. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot and pumpkin.
3. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 or 2 which includes one or more added solutes.
4. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose and sorbitol.
5. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 having a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.
6. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 5 having a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

7. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content which is from about 8% to about 20%.

8. (Original): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is further dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 10%.

9. (Previously Presented): A process for the preparation of a dehydrated, rapidly rehydrating, vegetable product which comprises partially dehydrating vegetable pieces to a moisture content from about 8% to about 30%, compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension, and thereafter further dehydrating the compressed vegetable piece to a moisture content of about 12% or lower, wherein the vegetable piece when placed in water at a temperature of 90°C to 100°C without further application of heat is capable of rehydration substantially to its original fresh dimension and is of edible tenderness and texture instantly or within five minutes.

10. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 9 wherein the vegetable is selected from the group consisting of carrots, peas, peppers, tomatoes, sweet corn, onion, squash, chillies, zucchini, mushroom, cabbage, celery, green beans, beetroot and pumpkin.

11. (Original): A process according to claim 9 wherein prior to compressing the vegetable piece in one dimension one or more solutes are added to the piece.

12. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 11 wherein said solutes are selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium lactate, potassium lactate, sodium citrate, glucose, sucrose, fructose and sorbitol.

13. (Original): A process according to claim 9 wherein the compressed vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from about 2% to about 12%.

14. (Original): A process according to claim 13 wherein the vegetable piece is dehydrated to a moisture content from 4% to 6%.

15. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 1 wherein the vegetable piece is compressed in a roller mill at a roller gap of 0.2 to 2.5 mm.

16. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 9 wherein said vegetable piece is compressed in a roller mill at a roller gap of 0.2 to 2.5 mm.

17. (Previously Presented): A vegetable product according to claim 3 wherein said vegetable piece contains said added solutes in an amount from 0.3% to 10% w/w.

18. (Previously Presented): A process according to claim 11 wherein said added solutes are present in an amount from 0.3% to 10% w/w.